

PRESS RELEASE



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ATTENTION: NEWS EDITORS

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U.S. AND MALAYSIAN MUSEUMS TO PARTNER IN ART EXCHANGE

SOMArts Cultural Center, San Francisco, and Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia Host Intercultural Youth Program



The U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur is pleased to announce that the SOMArts Cultural Center, in partnership with the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, has been awarded a combined \$97,380 in grant funding by Museums ConnectSM, an initiative of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Administered by the American Alliance of Museums, this ten month-long youth program called *Flag Stories: Citizenship Unbound* will involve youth aged 13 to 17 from Muslim and non-Muslim, intercultural and indigenous, and first and second generation citizen communities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and San Francisco, California, U.S., in a transnational creative and cultural exchange around shared issues of identity, community and worldview.

Cultural Affairs Attaché Arend Zwartjes noted that at the Ann Dunham batik exhibition last year, her daughter and U.S. President Obama's sister, Dr. Maya Ng-Soetoro, said that arts and culture create the strongest friendships and bonds between people and nations. "This collaboration between private and public organizations nurtures a relationship that focuses on communities that seem to be so physically far apart, but yet have so many shared positive values. By encouraging our youth to express their creativity through this project, we encourage them to see their place in their community and in the world."

Under the guidance of professional teaching artists, youth will interpret flags and cultural symbols through hands-on art production and story-telling; create new visual and multimedia representations of national, personal and cultural identity; and present public artwork in target community locations.

During the course of the project, participants will exhibit their artwork, that will include photography, film, creative writing, paintings and designs on the Internet, in the community, and in a culminating art exhibition in both cities' host museums.

Both Malaysian and American youth participants will work on their projects through the ten months and eventually visit each other in their respective countries for a one-week learning and cultural exchange dialogue.

About Museums ConnectSM

Museums ConnectSM is made possible by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is administered by the American Alliance of Museums. *Flag Stories: Citizenship Unbound*, a Museums ConnectSM project, is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is administered by the American Alliance of Museums.

About SOMArts Cultural Center

SOMArts (South of Market Arts, Resources, Technology, and Services) was founded in 1979 and operates the South of Market Cultural Center, one of four city-owned cultural facilities in San Francisco. SOMArts supports exhibitions, performances, classes and other collaborations that serve its mission: to promote and nurture art on the community level and foster an appreciation of and respect for all cultures.

About Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) is managed by the Albukhary Foundation, a Malaysia-based non-governmental not-for-profit organization with an international presence. The mission of this Museum is to be the Custodian, Restorer, Preserver, and Educator of Islamic arts. By organizing educational exhibitions and academic programs, the Museum plays an important role in establishing itself as a centre of learning, research and development of the history, arts and culture of Islam especially to the multi-ethnic community and people of this region. This project, a first of its kind for the museum reflects the museum's mission in promoting Islamic heritage, culture and scholarship among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and forge a more equitable and tolerant world through social welfare, education and cultural initiatives that bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots, and between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds.

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